

# Cohort Specific Change of Life Events: Effects of Societal Change towards Individualization

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## FOCUS

Have individual biographies changed over the past 50 years?

How has societal change influenced the lives of individuals from different cohorts?

How do persons from different cohorts perceive their past and future biography?

## CONCLUSIONS

- Analysis of individual biographies can be used to identify aspects of historical and societal change
- The life period between childhood and young adulthood was most affected by historical changes

**NEXT STEPS** more qualitative analyses of interview data

questionnaire study based on present findings (N=600; January 1999)

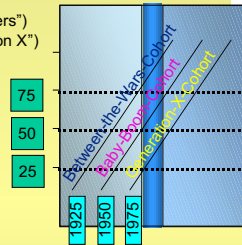
## DESIGN

Qualitative interview study with 3 different cohorts (N=75): a measure of historical change

- Oldest cohort: born 1920-25 ("Between-the-wars" generation)
- Middle cohort: born 1945-50 ("Baby boomers")
- Youngest cohort: born 1970-75 ("Generation X")

## INTERVIEW focus on 4 life periods:

- birth to young adulthood (0-25 yrs)
- young to middle adulthood (25-50)
- middle adulthood to old age (50-75)
- old age to very old age (over 75)

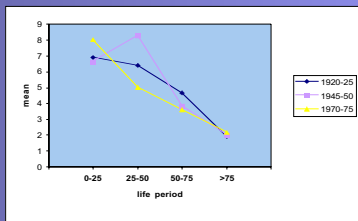


Participants from different cohorts assessed the life periods from different perspectives

*This "simulates" a classical longitudinal design over 100 years!*

For each life period, a panorama of significant life events was elaborated. Also, consequences of each life event for the further life course and control over the event were assessed

## Number of mentioned life events



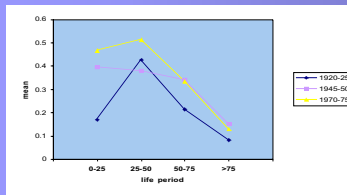
ANOVA  
Cohort by sex by life period

- Main effect of life period
- Interaction between life period and cohort for life period 25-50 - a perspective effect?

the time between 0 and 25 still seems to be the most important period for the constitution of the personal biography, in spite of historical and societal change

## Control

Percentage of control over life events

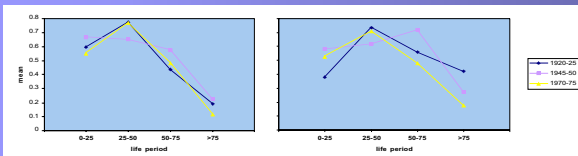


ANOVA:  
cohort by sex by life period

- Main effect: cohort and life period
- Interaction: life period - cohort
- Oldest cohort experienced less control for period 0-25: societal change?

## Consequences

Percentage of positively rated consequences of life events



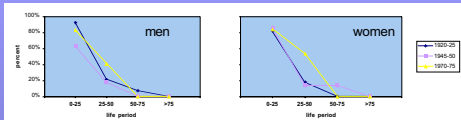
ANOVA: cohort by sex by life period

- Main effect: life period
- Interaction: life period - cohort AND life period - sex

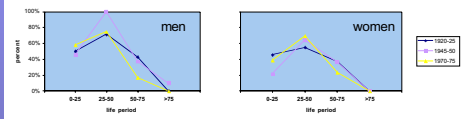
## Sample categories of mentioned life events

Percentage of participants mentioning the event

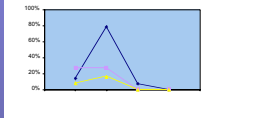
### Education



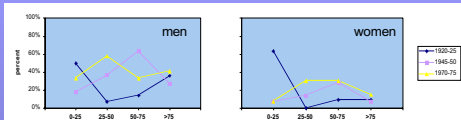
### Work



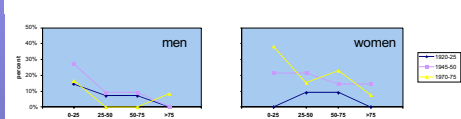
### Marriage



### Social



### Self-related



Would you mention your own death as part of your biography?

67% of 25-year-old men did, compared to approx. 20% of other groups

